



Foster Parent Spotlight

Jennifer Jockhims



Jennifer Jockhims is a social worker for Milwaukee Child Protective Services and has been a foster parent for approximately eight years in

Waukesha County. She lives in the Town of Erin with her fifteen-year-old foster daughter, her eight-year-old foster son and their adopted dog. Jennifer got into foster parenting because she believes that children are the next generation and she wanted to help out for the betterment of society.

Two of the most rewarding experiences in foster care for Jennifer have been teaching her foster daughter how to hug and express love, and the other was throwing her foster son his very first birthday party. She also states

We Need You!

If you are considering being a foster parent, please read the article on Page 3 of this newsletter!

For more information about becoming a foster parent in Waukesha County, please contact Shari Rather at: srather@waukeshacounty.gov 262-548-7267 or visit our website at www.waukeshacounty.gov and follow the links to foster care.

that she finds it rewarding to be able to allow kids to see another side of life - a side that isn't so scary or negative. When asked for her "words of wisdom" Jennifer immediately says that no matter what, you have to keep a sense of humor to get you through. She also advises all foster parents to advocate for their foster children and to be comfortable and bold enough to ask the social workers for services and help. Thank you for all of your support Jennifer!

September '04 Placements

Regular Foster Care:

81 Children
8 Admitted
2 Discharged

Treatment Foster Care:

31 Children
2 Admitted
0 Discharged

Group Homes:

1 Children
1 Admitted
2 Discharged

Residential Care Facilities:

13 Children
0 Admitted
0 Discharged

Relative Placements:

18 Children
3 Admitted
0 Discharged

Contact Numbers:

Waukesha H & HS
262-548-7212

Eve Altizer Children's Mental
Health Outreach
262-548-7310

Crisis Mentoring Pager
414-848-6711

Medical Emergency
911

Family Emergency
211

Judy David
Support Group President
414-671-3747
(home) 414-462-8446

Lisa Alden, Supervisor
262-548-7271

Shari Rather,
Foster Care Coordinator
262-548-7267

Social Workers:

Bob Alioto
262-548- 7262

Peggy Beisser
262-548-7261

Kathe Blum
262-548-7275

Barb Hufschmidt
262-548-7270

Margaret Johnson
262-548-7265

Suzanne Koberstein
262-548-7348

Elizabeth Russo
262-548-7349

Kim Sampson
262-548-7273

Linda Senger
262-548-7698

Marilyn Videgar
262-548-7363

Ted Wuerslin
262-548-7269

Jennifer Wygle
262-548-7260

Happy Holidays!

On behalf of our Department, I would like to wish you and you family a "Safe and Happy Holiday Season". During this time of the year it's important to reflect on our good fortunes. I would like to express my appreciation for your willingness to share your home with children who need temporary care. Your dedication and commitment has given me hope that we can make a positive difference in the lives of children. Thank you for being part of our team!

Sincerely,
Jesus Mireles
Children & Family Division Manager

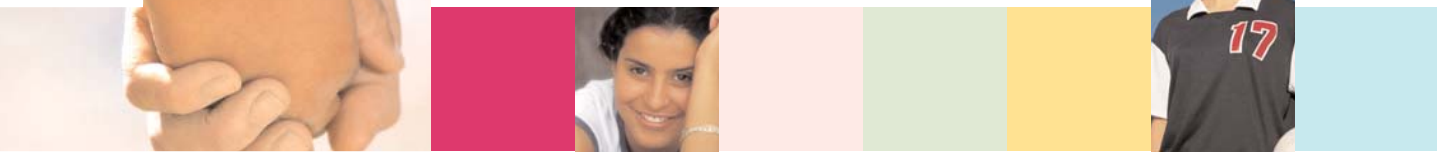
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can be beneficial for foster parents.

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Thanksgiving
from the Waukesha
County Department
of Health & Human
Services!

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Waukesha County Foster Care Forum is published monthly by the Department of Health and Human Services. Please send your ideas and suggestions to:

srather@waukeshacounty.gov
500 Riverview Ave. in Waukesha 53188

Fostering the Whole Family

When doing foster care, we are given many opportunities to gain a connection to the child's family. How we choose to use these opportunities makes the difference between fostering a child and fostering a family. Visit time is usually when we see the family the most.

I've met grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other family members, both before and after visits. Remember that these family members are experiencing a great loss, as well. They often do not get the visitation time that parents get. Listen to what they have to say, if you're comfortable with the conversation. I've taken times with extended family members to jot down genealogy and have it added to the children's life books. One grandfather related his WWII stories. This is a great way to help instill pride in children's birth families, and to build a sense of self-esteem and identity.

The holidays bring a great opportunity for forming a connection with the family. Take a gift to the parents. I usually get the children's pictures taken for Christmas, and I like to bring the parents framed photos. I also include an envelope with several different pictures in a variety of sizes, which parents can keep for themselves or to give to family. Additionally, I like to frame a smaller size photo, like 5"X7", for grandparents at Christmas time. Another idea is purchasing a small scrapbook, into which you can just slip photos. This makes a great gift, and the parents seem to enjoy the candid pictures. If you are uncomfortable giving a gift, a simple card is a nice gesture.

Remember that the goal of fostering is almost always reunification of the family. In most cases, this is best for all involved. By fostering these connections with the parents and building a relationship of trust, foster parents begin to mentor a whole family instead of fostering one child. Parents may then be willing to ask of you, the foster parents, parenting questions or advice. And, when the child goes home, the parents will have you as another resource to lean upon while they work to rebuild their lives. This is, hopefully, a relationship that will last between your two families for some time to come.

Your efforts to foster the whole family and build trust, will give the child the opportunity to have several people in his/her life that care for him/her.

Written by Carrie Craft

New Fiscal Year May Bring Changes

There have been many "behind the scene" changes occurring in the Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services and particularly the Child and Family Services Division over the last several months. One of these changes is the initiation of the mandated statewide automated child welfare information system (WiSacwis). This new computer system has had a significant impact on our documentation and paperwork flow procedures. One area that is being impacted in particular is our fiscal department. We now have two systems in use to generate payments to our providers. We are in the process of learning how to coordinate these two systems to ensure prompt and proper payment.

We do not foresee any major problems or any changes in how you receive payments. However, if there are any discrepancies between the two systems at the time that foster care payment checks are generated, the check will need to be cancelled, the systems coordinated and a new check created. This could produce a week delay in the receipt of your payment than what you are now accustomed to. We want you to be aware of these changes and ask for your patience while we "work out the bugs". If you have any questions or problems with your payments, please contact your caseworker or Lisa Alden (548-7271), Permanency Services Supervisor, and we will make every attempt to answer questions and expedite payments. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

Foster Parent Roundtable

November 16 at 5:45pm

Each year the county holds a meeting for foster parents to voice concerns, offer solutions, and pats on the back for a job well done.

This year we will also have an educational session as well. Corrine Beal a therapist at Rogers Memorial Hospital will speak on ADHD and give foster parents suggestions in coping with a child placed in their home.

The meeting will be November 16 at 5:45 to 8ish at Steinhafels community room. A meal will be served so FP's planning on attending should contact Shari Rather by November 10th so there is an accurate count for the food order.

262-548-7267

or

srather@waukeshacounty.gov

Social Workers and Supervisors from the unit will be there.

How Not to Go Crazy During School Holiday Breaks!

Being a foster parent can be a very rewarding experience, but can also be one of the toughest. Living with behaviors that at times can be challenging, as well as the strong emotions that go along with fostering, can add to the stress. Breaks from each other can prove to be beneficial to both the foster family and the foster child.

Create chore lists/charts. Chores not only help kids learn responsibility but they teach life skills.

Lessons or sports? How about swim lessons? Dance? Soccer? How about art? This will teach the kids skills and give you a break. *These options may need to be approved by birth family or an agency.*

Scouting. Scouting can be a great activity with plenty of learning and fun. *Again approval from your agency is a must.*

Cultural Activities. Get the kids excited about learning about their culture.

Life books. What a great time to focus on updating or completing the children's lifebooks. Working on their lifebooks may be a learning activity that they might be able to do with little help, depending on the age of the child, from you.

Are you considering becoming a foster parent?

Points to Consider

After gathering information from the Waukesha County Health and Human Services; ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you have a strong support system of friends and/or family? This is important, as fostering can become very stressful at times. It's good to have someone who will listen if you need to vent. If you don't have a support system already in place and decide to go ahead with fostering, be sure to participate in support groups. Many agencies hold their own support group meetings. If not, consider starting your own with other foster parents.

2. Are you a patient person? Are you willing to continually give and very rarely get anything in return, except for the knowledge that you are helping a family?

3. Many people enter into foster care thinking that they are rescuing a poor child from an abusive parent. These foster parents believe that the child will be grateful and relieved to be out of their home situation. This is rarely the case. Abuse is all that the child may know. The child's bad situation is his/her "normal". Be prepared for the child to be anything but happy about being in your home. In other words, examine your expectations. What are you expecting? Not only from the child, but from his or her parents, the state and the fostering experience itself? High expectations can lead to your fall!

4. Kids in care have sometimes been neglected, physically, sexually, mentally and emotionally abused. The children can be angry, resentful and sad. They may take it out on their foster parents, usually the foster mother. Are you willing and able to deal with what the children may put on you, and not take it personally? This is harder than it seems, especially when you are being kicked or cussed out.

5. Are you willing to have social workers in your home, sometimes every month? Can you work in a partnership with a team of professionals to help the child either get back home or to another permanent placement, such as adoption? This goal requires excellent communication skills on your part, and a commitment to follow the plan set forth by the social workers.

6. Can you say goodbye? Foster care is not a permanent arrangement. The children will move on someday. Permanency is what you want for them. However, you and your family will attach to this child, so don't fool yourself into thinking otherwise. Attachment is a good thing, for both you and the child. If the child can attach and trust you, they will be able to do

the same with others in their lives and this leads to a healthier future. Goodbye does not have to mean forever. In some cases, with permission from the birth parent or adopted parent, a relationship with your foster children can remain intact after a move. We have a relationship with a few of our past foster daughters and enjoy seeing them and receiving cards and phone calls. They even still ask us for advice.

7. If you have children of your own, how do they feel about doing foster care? It's important to consider every member of your family when thinking about fostering. Everyone in the house will be living and interacting with the foster child and his or her behaviors. Your children will have to share their home, room, toys, and parents. They sacrifice a lot in becoming part of a fostering family. Ask your children how they feel and listen! Also, be aware that your child may learn or pick up whatever the foster child knows, both the good and the bad. Are you prepared to stand guard at all times, making your home safe for all who live there?

8. What ages of children can you parent at this time? Consider the ages of your own children and where another child would fit into your family. Is a baby right for you? While you won't have to deal with foul language, you will have to give up sleep and basically "start over" if your children are grown. Or

would a school age child work better. In this situation you may not have to worry about day care. Also, consider the sex of the child. These are choices that are all up to you as a foster parent. You will also be given choices on what behaviors that you feel you can and cannot parent at this time. Be aware of the fact that many behaviors may not surface until the child feels safe enough to be him/herself. The social workers are also not always aware of a child's behavior at the time of placement.

9. Finally, do you have a lot of love to give? Are you ready to throw a child his/her first birthday party? Can you help him or her decorate a first Christmas tree or carve a first pumpkin? Help the child to see that families are a great place to grow up and show him/her an excellent role model of healthy family relationships? Give him/her an opportunity to heal and grow?

If you can say "yes" to most of these questions, then call your state foster care representative. You have an excellent chance of being a wonderful foster parent!



Written by Carrie Craft